

1968

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*Isaiah's Mission consider'd and apply'd.*

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IN A

# SERMON

Preached at the *Gathering* of a  
Church, and Ordination of their  
Pastor,

The Reverend

*Mr. JOSIAH COTTON,*

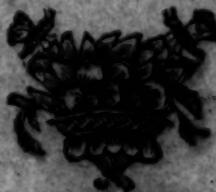
*In PROVIDENCE,*

*Octob. 23. 1728.*

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By *Nathaniel Appleton, M. A.*  
Pastor of the Church in Cambridge.

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## Isaiah's Mission Consider'd and apply'd.

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Isaiah VI. 8.

*Also I heard the Voice of the Lord, saying,  
Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ?  
Then I said, Here am I, send me.*

**G**OD being about to employ the holy Prophet as a Messenger to preach and prophesy unto his People, qualifies, and prepares, animates and encourages him to such an important, but difficult Service, by making a glorious manifestation of himself to him in Vision : of which we have an Account in the beginning of this Chapter. According to which Account, Heaven it self seemed to be opened to the Prophet, by the glorious representation that was made thereof in the Temple, which was the Symbol of Heaven. Here he beheld *the King, the Lord of Hosts,* (which from *John 12. 41.* appears to be the Lord *Jesus*

Jesus Christ) sitting upon a Throne, high and lifted up, encompassed with the Heavenly Hosts of Seraphims; paying their Adorations to him, crying out one to another, saying, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole Earth is full of his Glory.* Upon which the very Door-posts of the Temple were moved, and the House filled with Smoke, which was the Glory of God, as appears from 2 Chron. 7. 1. But this was not all the Effect of this glorious appearance; for it struck the Prophet into Terror and Amazement, and gave him such a sight of his sinfulness, and the sinfulness of the People among whom he dwelt, that it made him cry out, as in the 5th. verse, *Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a Man of unclean Lips, and I dwell in the midst of a People of unclean Lips, for mine Eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* It was the sight of God, a lively apprehension of his Glory, and especially of his holiness, as it was proclaimed by the Angels, that filled him with such an abasing sense of his own, and the People's Sinfulness and Vileness. — And it is most certain that a spiritual sight of God will fill any Man with such an humble sense of himself. It had this Effect on Job, (Chap. 42. 5, 6) *I have heard of thee by the bearing of the Ear, but now mine Eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor my self, and repent in Dust and Ashes.* And surely such a sight of God as will thus humble and abase us, is an excellent preparative for our going into God's Service, and to deliver his Messages to his People; for none but such as are self-humbled, and self-abased, are fit for such an high and holy Calling.

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And now the Prophet being brought to such a sense of his unclean, and so his undone estate, God takes care, before he sends him forth into his service, to have him purified, and cleansed, and gives him the comfortable Evidences of it; for behold a Seraph flies with a live Coal in his Hand, which he had taken from off the Altar, either of Incense or that of burnt Offerings, for both had Fire burning continually upon them (as Mr. Henry observes) and laying the same on the Prophet's Mouth, tells him, *His Iniquity is taken away, and his Sin purged.* — From whence we may learn, that such as are to be Messengers of the Lord of Hosts, that are to be God's Mouth unto the People, and the People's Mouth unto God, should have both their Hearts and Lips, cleansed from their Sin, they must be touched with a Coal from the Altar, that is, they must have the Merits of Christ's Sacrifice, and the purifying Influences of his Spirit applied to them, before they are fit to bear his Name among the People.

And thus I have briefly taken Notice of this glorious Vision, till I am come to that part of it, which I intend by the help of God more particularly to insist upon. The Prophet being touched with a Coal from the Altar, and hearing those comfortable words from the ministering Spirit that was sent unto him; he immediately heard another Voice, even the Voice of the Lord, who sat upon a Throne high and lifted up, saying, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* It seems God had very important Messages to send to his People, and there must be some proper Person appointed

to

to deliver them ; upon which there is a divine Council held, where the Three that bear record in Heaven, are deliberating and consulting. For as it is well observed by Expositors, here is a fair intimation of the Trinity, or at least of a plurality of Persons in the God-head, and yet the unity of the Godhead. — Whom shall I send ? in the singular, and who will go for *us* ? in the plural Number, as in Gen. 1. 26. Let *us* make Man, &c.

*Whom shall I send ?* None are to go on God's Errands, or undertake to deliver his Messages, but those whom *he* sends ; None may undertake the sacred Office of the Ministry, but such as have a Mission and Commission from Christ. *How shall they preach, except they be sent ?* as the Apostle speaks, Rom. 10. 15.

*And who will go for us ?* Those whom God sends go for *him* ; go forth not only in his Name, but upon his Account, to promote his Cause, Interest and Glory. God's faithful Messengers, such as he sends and approves of, don't go forth into his Service from selfish Views and sinister Ends ; but for the cause of God, they seek not their own Glory, but the Glory of him that sent them, in imitation of their Master that went before them. Job. 8. 50. And now God is deliberating with himself who this Person shall be. The Interrogatory manner of speech seems to intimate as if God was at a stand about the matter : but this may not be supposed of him whose Understanding is infinite ; but it serves to intimate the difficulty, greatness, and importance of the Service, and how much God was concerned to have a proper and suitable Person to undertake it, one that was fit

for

## An Ordination-Sermon.

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for the Service, and disposed to engage in it.

*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Where is there a fit and proper Person for me to send upon such important Service, who is qualified and accomplished to deliver my Messages unto the People, and who is disposed to go for us? who is spirited and inclined to undertake such a difficult Service?*

And thus much for the Inquiry God is making in our Text, and the Import of it.

In the next place we may observe the Prophet's Reply thereto, *Then I said, Here am I, send me.* The Prophet no sooner hears God inquiring for one that would go into his Service, and deliver his Messages to his People, but he offers himself to it; he presents himself unto him, as one ready to engage in his Service, and desires he would accept of him, *Here am I, send me.*

But why was the Prophet so ready to undertake this Service, which he could not but know would be attended with a great many difficulties? He must needs know that it was a difficult and dangerous Office to be the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts to a sinful People: If he be faithful in delivering his Messages unto them, he knew from the experience he had had already, that altho' a number might hearken unto him, yet that multitudes would despise and reject his Messages unto them; that they would slight and despise him, that they would reproach and slander him, that they would contradict and gainsay his Doctrines and Exhortations; and that he must deny himself many of the Comforts of Life, and go thro' many hardships.

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ships and difficulties; I say, considering the Prophet must needs know something of the difficulties that would attend this Service, why did he so readily offer himself to undertake it? Now the reason is very plain and obvious: God had favoured the Prophet with a glorious Vision, *His Eyes had seen the King, the Lord of Hosts;* which humbled the Prophet, and so far prepared, and disposed him to engage in any Service that God should call him to, without objecting any thing against the difficulties and hardships he should meet with therein, being convinced by that glorious and self humbling sight, that he ought to engage in any Service God should call him to, and that it was Honour sufficient to be employed by this glorious King, however difficult and troublesome the Service might be.

But besides this he had *his Lips touched with a live-Coal from off the Altar,* which was not only a sign of his Iniquities being taken away; but also of the special and blessed Influences of the holy Spirit upon his Soul. When that live-Coal touched his Lips, the Holy Ghost touched his Heart, and he was baptized with it as with Fire: for it set him all in a flame of love to God, and zeal for his Glory, that overcame all the difficulties and discouragements in the Service of God, so that he could no sooner hear the Question, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* but he answers with all imaginable cheerfulness, *here am I, send me.*

The Words so largely opened afford many useful Observations; I shall mention only three, which I shall speak very briefly to.

I. God

1. God is greatly concerned to have proper and suitable Persons employed in his Service, to deliver his Messages unto his People.
2. When God has any Messages to deliver, his Gospel so send unto a People, such as are prepared for that Service should readily offer themselves unto it, notwithstanding any difficulties and discouragements in the way.
3. Our being prepared, and disposed for such difficult Service depends upon our being touched with the powerful Influences of the Holy Ghost.

**Doct. 1.** God is greatly concerned to have proper and suitable Persons employed in his Service to deliver his Messages unto his People.

Here let me say, as the Doctrine implies,

1. God has some Errands, and Messages to send to the Children of Men.

That is, God has some things concerning Himself, concerning his Being and Perfections, concerning his Works and his Will, to reveal unto us, which we can't come to the knowledge of, but by divine Revelation; and yet of infinite Importance to be known by us: and therefore God in tender Condescension is pleased to send such Messages to us, to inform us of what is necessary to be known by us. These therefore are in general the Messages that God has sent and is sending to the Children of Men, namely,

that he is the true God, that he is the living God and an everlasting King, that he is the Almighty God, and that his Understanding is infinite, that he is the God of Truth and without Iniquity, and just and right is he: that he is good and does good, and that the whole Earth is full of his goodness: that he made all things, and for his pleasure they are and were created. That he made us and not we our selves, and that he made Man upright, but we soon sought out many Inventions: but although we destroyed our selves, yet in him was our Help found, and that he has laid help upon one that was mighty to save; that he so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son for us, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting Life. That Christ was deliver'd for our Offences, and rose again for our Justification, and ever lives to make Intercession for us at the right hand of God, and that he will make a second and glorious appearance in the World, at which time, the Dead both small and great shall arise, and appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ, to receive a Reward according to all things done in the Body: And that the Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.

Now these and such like Messages God has been and is sending to his People, and which we have received from his Word and by the Ministers of it, who are called the Messengers of the Lord of Hosts, because their Business is to deliver these Messages unto the People, to preach the Gospel, and declare the whole Coun-

sel of God unto them.

2. It may likewise be said, that God employs some from among our selves to deliver his Messages, to dispense his Word, and Ordinances unto his People.

God don't deliver his Mind to us by his own Mouth immediately from Heaven: nor does he send it to us by the Ministry of Angels, as he did the Law at Mount Sinai; but he commits this Affair unto Men among our selves, our Brethren, partakers of the same Flesh and Blood, and subject to like Passions, Infirmities, and Imperfections as other Men. And now God orders it so,

1. *In merciful Condescension to us, that his Terror might not make us afraid.*

Such is the infinite Greatness of the divine Being, and with Him is such terrible Majesty, that we could not hear his Voice immediately without the utmost terror and amazement. *The Voice of the Lord, says the Psalmist, 29 Psal. 4, 5. is powerful, the Voice of the Lord is full of Majesty.* And so terrible was his Voice when he delivered the Law at Mount Sinai, that all the People intreated Moses, saying, *Speak thou unto us and we will bear; but let not God speak with us lest we die.* Exod. 20. 19.

2. *God does it to put Honour upon Men.*

It is an unspeakable Honour to be a Messenger of the King of Heaven, to be employed in bringing his Messages unto his People, and in returning the Prayers and Praises of his People to him. The Angels look upon it as their honour and happiness to be his Ministers, and to do his pleasure, and to be sent forth to minister unto

unto them that shall be Heirs of Salvation. Heb. 1. 14  
And surely it must needs be a peculiar honour unto Men, that any of them are employed in this sacred Function. And God has no doubt a design herein to confer honour and respect on Man; for he has always been disposed to do it: he at first *crowned Man with Glory and Honour*, and since the Fall he has through the infinite Riches of his Grace put the greatest honour upon our Nature; for Christ the Eternal Son of God, who refused to take on him the *Nature of Angels*, became the *Seed of Abraham*. And now he is passed into the Heavens, he appears at the right hand of the Father in our Nature, where all the Angels in Heaven worship him. And although they are all ministering Spirits to the Saints, yet he puts this honour upon some of the Children of Men as to make them his Messengers and Embassadors, Commissioning *them* to preach the Gospel, and to manage all the Affairs of his visible Kingdom among Men. Altho' an Angel is sent to *Cornelius*, yet it is only to direct him to send for *Peter*, a Man like himself, who had the honour of Preaching the Gospel to him, and shewing him the way to Salvation. *Act. 10.* But,

3. *God does it to make his Power known.*

The more weak the Instruments are that God makes use of, to bring about the Conversion and Salvation of Sinners, the more plain and conspicuous is the Power of God in it. And the Glory of the work will be more readily granted to him, and this is the Account the Apostle gives of the matter, *2 Cor. 4. 7. We have this*

*Trea-*

## An Ordination-Sermon.

Treasure in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us. The Instruments being so weak makes it the more evident, that it is not by the Power of the Instruments that any are Converted, but by the Power of God. By this it will for ever appear that although Paul plants and Apollo waters, yet it is God that gives the Increase.

3. God is greatly concerned to have proper and suitable Persons employed in his Service, to deliver his Messages unto his People.

*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* are words that import a great concern of Mind about the matter.

For the clearing this Proposition, there are three things that naturally fall under consideration.

1. *Who* are proper Persons to be employed in God's Service, to be his Messengers unto his People, or *what* are the Qualifications for such a Service?

2 *How* or *wherein* it appears that God is greatly concerned to have suitable Persons employed in his Service?

3. *Why* he is so much concerned about it?

But I must only just hint at these things.

Quest. 1. *Who* are proper and suitable Persons to be God's Messengers unto his People? *What* is it that will qualify Persons for this sacred Office?

Now without giving a particular Account of those things that would qualify and accomplish Men for the Ministerial Office, I shall only say in general, *That a good measure of spiritual Gifts, and Graces are the things that qualify Men to be God's Messengers to his People.*

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### An Ordination-Sermon.

Spiritual Gifts, they enable Men to deliver the Messages of God to his People, and Graces serve to dispose and incline Men to undertake the Service, and to be faithful in it. Persons of but low Attainments in Gifts and Graces are not fit for so high and holy a Calling. The suitable Persons for this sacred Office are such as having good natural Powers and Capacities, have the same improved, and enlarged by acquired knowledge: they are such as have attained to a good degree of Knowledge and Learning, especially in things spiritual: they are such as are well acquainted with the Scriptures, the great Doctrines, and Duties contained therein: and that have the Gift of opening, confirming and applying the same to others. Moreover, they must be Men of great *Wisdom*, and singular Prudence to manage such a weighty and difficult Affair.

But besides these things it is highly requisite that they have an *experimental* Knowledge of God and Christ, whom they are to preach to others; and that they have their Souls inflamed with Love to them, and that they be filled with a tender compassionate Regard to the Souls of those to whom they are sent; which may put them upon being true to the Interest of Christ their Master, and faithful to those under their Charge.

In short, for I may not enlarge, Men of Knowledge and Wisdom, Men of Faith and Prayer, Men of Humility and Charity, Men of Patience and Self-denial, Men of Zeal and true Christian Courage, accompanied with an exemplary Life and Conversation, are suitable Persons

to be Messengers and Embassadors of Christ, and to minister in holy things.

Quest. 2. How and wherein does it appear that God is concerned to have proper and suitable Persons employed in his Service?

Ans. 1. From the particular Directions he has given as to the Qualifications and Accomplishments of such as engage in this Service.

Thus we have a general Direction that they should be clean that bear the Vessels of the Lord. Isa. 52. 11. And what a particular Description have we of the Qualifications necessary for Gospel-Bishops or Ministers by the Apostle Paul, 1 Tim. 3. 2——11. A Bishop then must be blameless, the Husband of one Wife, vigilant, sober, of good Behaviour, given to Hospitality, apt to teach, not given to Wine, no striker: not greedy of filthy Lucre, but patient, not a brauler, not covetous, one that ruleth well his own House, having his Children in subjection with all gravity. For if a Man know not how to rule his own House, how shall he take care of the Church of God? Not a Novice, lest being lifted up with Pride he fall into the Condemnation of the Devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without, lest he fall into Reproach, and the snare of the Devil. And so in his Epistles to Titus, where telling him that he left him in Crete to ordain Elders in every City, he proceeds to say what kind of Men they must be, as in Titus 1. 5, &c. And now these Qualifications of Gospel-Ministers being left on Scripture-Record for the Direction of the Church in all Ages, shew the Concern God has, that there may be always proper and suitable Persons employed in his Service.

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Ans.

Ans. 2. It may be argued from the Caution given about receiving any into this sacred Office.

Thus in 1. Tim. 5. 22. Timothy is strictly caution'd against laying Hands suddenly on any Man: that is, he must not rashly bring any into the Ministerial Office; but must wait till he had sufficient Proof of their being qualified and accomplished for that Service, before he should presume to lay hands on them in solemn Ordination: the way of separating to that sacred Office, being by the laying on of the bands of the Presbytery. 1 Tim. 4. 14.

Ans. 3. Again, It may be argued from the Provision God has for the most part made, and blessed for the educating and training up of Persons for that sacred Office.

Wherever the Church of God has been fixed and settled, God has expressed his Concern for having suitable Persons employed in his Service, by affording for the most part special means to accomplish them therefor, that is, by putting it into the Hearts of such a People to erect Schools and Colleges for Learning, wherein Persons have been instructed and duly qualified for, and then called forth into this sacred Service.

Here I might say, that Moses, who from his Birth was designed to be an eminent Prophet of the Lord, was by the Providence of God favoured with a liberal Education, and was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, which was as considerable as any at that time in the World, and so by the concurring Influences of the holy Spirit, sanctifying the same, he became mighty in words and in deeds, as the Apostle tells us, Act. 7. 22.

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And when God had settled his visible Church the *Israelitish* Nation in the promised Land, he shewed his Concern for their having well-qualified Prophets, and Preachers among them, by the Schools and Colleges that were erected, and supported for the educating and training up some of their Youth for that divine Employment. Thus we often read of the *Sons of the Prophets*, (1 King. 20. 35. 2 King. 2. 3.) which were young Men trained up under the Instruction of some elder Prophets; and these were doubtless Educated in Schools, and then in Colleges, from whence they went forth to Preach and Prophesy among the People. And there are fair Intimations of several such Seminaries of Learning or Schools of the Prophets, one at *Bethel*, and another at *Jericho*, 2 King. 2. 3, 5. And another at *Gilgal*, (2 King. 4. 38.) of which *Elisha* was President, which was such a growing College in his Time, that they were obliged to enlarge their Buildings for the reception of the Scholars. (2 King. 6. begin.) And here I might observe, that this very Prophet *Isaiah*, (if we may believe Jewish Traditions) being of the “Blood Royal,” had doubtless peculiar Advantages for his Education, and his natural Parts, with his great Acquirements in Learning, being sanctified, rendered him (as Mr. Pool observes) “the Prince of all the Prophets, and that there are more Quotations in the New-Testament taken out of *Isaiah*, than out of all the other Prophets”.

And since Christianity has been set up in the World, God has after the same manner been shewing his concern, that there might be

sitable Persons employed in preaching the everlasting Gospel to the People. For altho' our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, for wise and good Ends, was pleased to make Choice of illiterate Fishermen for the first preachers and propagators of Christianity, preparing them for that Service, by pouring down the miraculous Gifts of the Spirit upon them; yet even these were for some Years training up for that Service, under the Discipline and Instruction of the best of Tutors, even Christ himself. And afterwards when the Church came to be settled, Men of Learning were improved in that Service, and Means of Education were provided, and God has all along smiled upon such Seminaries of Learning and Piety, by employing for the most part, those that have had their Education in them, in his Service. They have been Fountains, when they have been kept clear and uncorrupt, whose Streams have made glad the Churches of our God.— Nay, and if we will but look back to the Apostles times, we shall find that the most eminent of them all was prepared for his peculiar usefulness to the Church by his liberal Education; I mean the Apostle Paul, who although he was one as it were *born out of due time*, yet *came not behind the very chiefest Apostles*, and laboured *more abundantly than they all*; and there are more of his writings left for the use, and benefit of the Church, than of any of the Apostles. And now God had an Eye to this, doubtless, when he ordered it so in his providence, that he should be brought up in the Learning of that Day,

For

For (as one \* observes concerning him) " his Education was in the School of *Tarsus* at first, " which was a little *Athens* for Learning ; there " he acquainted himself with the Philosophy " and Poetry of the Greeks : thence he was sent " to the University at *Jerusalem*, to study Divini- " ty, and the Jewish Law ; whose Tutor was " *Gamaliel*.

I have insisted the larger upon this Head, to remove the unreasonable prejudices any may have taken against Learning or learned Men, to see that God himself generally makes use of such to build up his Church and Kingdom in the World, as being the most suitable Persons for such Service.

Ans. 4. God's concern to have suitable Persons employed in his Service, appears from the great Solemnities that have been and are made use of, in setting Persons apart for, and bringing them into this sacred Office.

Thus, in what a solemn manner was *Aaron* and his Sons introduced into the priestly Office, and the Tribe of *Levi* into the Service of the Sanctuary ! And what a number of Ceremonies were made use of for the purification and cleansing of them ! And then what Solemnity was used with the Apostles, before they were sent forth, after our Saviour's Ascension ! Thus they are charged to tarry at *Jerusalem*, till they be indued with Power from on high. And this inducing with Power from on high, was in a very solemn manner ; for the Holy Ghost descended in a

visible manner upon them in *Cloven Tongues as of Fire, when they were praying together with one accord.* And altho' there is not at present any miraculous Solemnity, at the sending forth the ordinary Ministers of the Gospel, yet even now they are to be set apart with such solemn Fasting and Prayer, and imposition of the Hands of the Presbytery, and with such a solemn and awful Charge from the Lord Jesus, by the mouth of one of his Embassadors, as makes it very evident, that it is an Affair about which God is greatly concerned.

Ans. 5. Lastly, God's Concern about this matter may be argued from the promise of his continual presence with them.

When Christ gave his Commission to his Disciples to go and teach all Nations, &c. he concludes with this Promise, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the World.* Matth. 28. 20. Which must be understood of them and their Successors in all Ages of the Church. And now his promising to be with them, shows his Concern for them. For this Promise of Christ's presence, contains the Promise of his Spirit in all his ministerial Gifts and Graces, Qualifying and accomplishing them for, as well as encouraging and succeeding them in their work.

Quest. 3. *Why is God concerned about the Persons to be employed in his Service, and to be his Messengers unto his People?*

Here I shall only say in general,

*There being so few qualified for this trust, and yet the honour of Christ, and the welfare of precious Souls,*

are

are sufficient and very weighty Reasons for God to be greatly concerned in this matter.

The ministerial work is so great and difficult, that every Man is not fit for it, nor capable of managing it. Few Men are equal to the Dignity, Difficulty and Importance of this sacred Office. Multitudes there are that have neither Knowledge nor Prudence, nor Grace enough to go through such an undertaking.

But yet the Honour of Christ is greatly concerned in having suitable Persons employed in this Service. As it is for the Honour of a King to send suitable Embassadors, Men of Policy and Fidelity, to appear for him in foreign Courts, and to employ well qualified and faithful Officers to manage the Affairs of his own Kingdom; so the honour of Christ, that blessed and only Potentate requires that Men duly qualified be employed as his Messengers and Embassadors to the Children of Men.— And it is certain that nothing tends more to the dishonour of Christ, than unskilful and unfaithful Officers in managing the Affairs of his visible Kingdom: That is, in plain terms, nothing brings greater dishonour to the Name of Christ, and that holy Religion he has set up, than ignorant, loose and scandalous Ministers; and therefore God may well be concerned about this matter.

And then again, If we consider the Design of the Gospel Ministry, and how much the Salvation of Men's Souls depends upon the having skilful and faithful Guides, we shall see the Reason, why God is so concerned about it.

When

When God sends his Gospel to a People, it is that they might come to the Knowledge and Obedience of the Truth, and be saved: but if Persons unqualified for that Service be sent to preach the Gospel, it will have the most natural tendency to frustrate the gracious designs of God to such a People. Persons unaccomplished as to Gifts and Graces, for the ministerial Office, instead of advancing Religion, and promoting the Salvation of Men, they put a stop to it, and harden Men in their Iniquities, and lead them into Atheism, and Infidelity. And this is evident, not only from the natural tendency of the thing, but from too sad and frequent experience of it, in many parts of the Christian World. It is most certain that an Ignorant, loose, and debauched Clergy are some of the most powerful Engines the Devil has to ruin the Cause of Christ, and destroy the Souls of Men. Which are sufficient Reasons why God should be concerned in this matter: so concerned as to take all proper care, that suitable Persons be put into Service, and offended, and displeased when others intrude and thrust themselves into it.

Doct. 2. When God has a Message to deliver, his Gospel to send unto a People, altho' the Service be attended with difficulties and discouragements, yet such as God has prepared for it, should readily offer themselves unto it.

The Prophet being prepared, and qualified for the Service, did no sooner hear God say, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* but he answers, *Here am I, send me.* And this Example is written for our Instruction.

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Here let me say,

1. God may sometimes have Messages to deliver, the Gospel to send to such places as are attended with great difficulties and discouragements.

2. Such as are qualified and prepared for that Service, should readily offer themselves unto it notwithstanding.

1. God has sometimes Messages, Gospel-Messages to deliver, that are attended with great difficulties and discouragements.

The Work of the Ministry in general, which is to deliver the Messages of God in his Word unto his People, is a very difficult Service, and it is in Scripture compared to the most difficult Labours and Services that Men ever engage in. And it always requires a great deal of Skill, Prudence, Patience, Courage, Constancy and Resolution, faithfully to discharge the Duties of that Office. But then, there are some parts of this Office, some Places and Persons where, and to whom these Gospel Messages are to be delivered, that are attended with peculiar Difficulties and Discouragements.

1. The Nature of the Messages may be such as to render it a difficult and in it self an undesirable Service.

Thus, as the Scripture is profitable for Reproof, and Correction, as well as for Doctrine and Instruction; so these Admonitions and Reproofs must be administered to whom they belong. Ministers are solemnly charged to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and Doctrine. 2 Tim. 4. 2. They must cry aloud, and spare not;

they must lift up their Voice like a Trumpet, shewing to the House of *Jacob* their Transgression, and to *Israel* their Sin. People must be plainly told of their Faults, and sharply rebuked for them; and this not only in a general way, but there must be a personal Address made to them, telling them as *Nathan* did King *David*, *Thou art the Man*. But now this is a Duty attended with Difficulty: It was no doubt a hard Task to *Nathan*, and nothing less than the powerful Impression of a divine Command would have perwaded him to bring such a Message to the King.

2. *The Design or apprehended Effect of the Message may be such, as to render the Service very difficult and discouraging.*

God may have Messages of Judgment instead of Mercy to send to a People. When a People have been incorrigible under former Reproofs and Counsels, God may then send a Messenger in Judgment to them, to ripen them for the Judgments he intends to bring upon them: and so the design of the Message is to be a favor of Death unto Death, and not of Life unto Life; it may be to make hard hearts harder, and blind Eyes blinder.

And now it was such a Message God had to send to his People by the Prophet *Isaiah*, as appears from the following Words to my Text, *Go and tell my People, Hear ye indeed but understand not, see ye indeed but perceive not; make the Heart of this People fat, and mak their Ears heavy, and shut their Eyes, lest they see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Heart, and con-*

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vert, and be healed. And this must needs be a melancholy Errand indeed, and might well fill a Man with secret Horror and Dread at the thought of being the Instrument of such an awful Judgment.

3. Again, a great deal of difficulty may arise from the Places and Persons to whom these Messages may be sent.

God sometimes needs Messengers to go into foreign Countries, and to a strange Land, to a People of a strange Speech, and of a bard Language, whose Words we cannot understand. He may have occasion to send to barbarous and uncultivated Nations, where we must take leave of the Delights and Comforts of Life, which must needs render the Service difficult, and the Undertaking dangerous, to such as consult their present Ease and Pleasure. Furthermore, and that which is worse than all this, God sometimes sends to a hardened, wicked and obstinate People, that disregard all the Messages of God, and abuse his Messengers that are sent unto them. God may send Messengers to such a People, as he sent the Prophet *Ezekiel* to, of whom God himself declares, that they were a rebellious Nation, they and their Fathers, impudent Children, and stiff-hearted; and his living among them is represented, as living with Briers and Thorns, and among Scorpions, *Ezek. 2. begin.* God may have occasion to send Messengers to such as despise the Gospel, the Ordinances and the Ministers of it, that will scoff at them, and revile and abuse them, that will gainsay and oppose them, which must needs render the Service very difficult, dangerous and discouraging.

2. Notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements that may attend the delivering of any of God's Messages, yet such as are furnished and prepared for such Service should not be backward, but be very ready and willing to engage in it.

I say, such as are furnished and prepared for such Service: for it is not expected or required that others should offer themselves to it. As for such as have not had a liberal Education, nor any other advantages for gaining the ministerial Gifts of the Spirit, for them to offer to undertake such difficult Service, would shew their Pride, Ignorance and Presumption, rather than an hearty Zeal for the Glory of God. And the best interpretation that can be made of such over-forwardness is their having a Zeal but not according to knowledge.

But now, as for such as God has accomplished for this Service; whenever there is a Service of such a nature pointed out by Providence, and the Voice of Providence (for no immediate Voice is to be expected) seems to be, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* such ought to answer as readily as the Prophet, *Here am I, send me.* We should be ready to every good Work we are capable of and called unto, notwithstanding the difficulties that may appear in the way. If we apprehend it is the Will of God that we should go into such a Service, we must not confer with Flesh and Blood, but must surmount all the difficulties, and cheerfully engage in it. And that we ought to do so will appear abundantly evident, if we consider the absolute Sovereignty of God, and the relation he stands in to us, of a

Creator

Creator and Preserver, of a Redeemer and Saviour, and if we consider our absolute dependence upon him, for Life and Breath, and all things that we enjoy in the present World, and for Pardon and Grace, and eternal Life in the World that is to come. I say, if we consider these things, with all the Arguments they carry in them, we shall see such Persons to be under infinite Obligations to undertake the most difficult Service, that God shall call them unto. — But the particular consideration of those things I must pass over, that I might come to the third and last Doctrine. *viz.*

Doct. 3. Our being prepared and disposed to deliver those Messages of God unto his People, which are attended with peculiar difficulties, depends upon our being touched with the Influences of the Holy Ghost.

The Prophet is touched with a live-Coal from the Altar, which cleansed him from the Guilt and Filth of his Sins, and so prepared and disposed him, to say as in our Text, *Here am I, send me.* And, as has been observed, this live-Coal represents the Holy Ghost, which was very powerfully and sensibly conveyed to him in all the blessed Influences of it, at that time. The Prophet, no doubt, was a good Man before this, and really under the gracious Influences of the Holy Spirit: but yet not to such a degree as to prepare him for, or dispose him so readily to a Compliance with, such a difficult Service. But at the same time the Coal touched his Lips, the Holy Ghost touched his Heart, and gave him new Light, new Zeal, and new Courage, that he could say, *Here am I, send me.*

And

And thus it is with all that are spirited to engage in difficult Service, to go into any uncultivated parts of the Vineyard, that are very hard and troublesome to subdue. It is owing to their being touched with a Coal from the Altar, to the more powerful Influences of the Spirit, qualifying therefor, and animating and exciting thereto.

Under this Doctrine, I might for the Illustration of it observe, That Men naturally are unprepared for, and indisposed to do any Service for God, and that even good Men are very dull and backward at going into such Service as is attended with very peculiar difficulties; and so consequently, that it needs the more powerful Influences of the blessed Spirit to prepare Mens minds and incline their Hearts to engage therein. And so I might shew, that all that Knowledge, all that Skill, Wisdom and Prudence, all that Faith, that Humility, that Patience and Self-denial, and the like, which are so necessary to fit and accomplish Persons for the ministerial Work, are from the Spirit of God, and are declared to be the fruit of the Spirit. And not only so, but all those Dispositions and Inclinations and Desires, that are in any to undertake and engage in such Services for God as are attended with peculiar difficulties and discouragements are from the self-same Spirit. It is he that inspires our Souls with a Love to God and flaming Zeal for his Glory, and with the most compassionate Love and Concern for the Souls of Men, that will put us upon engaging in difficulties, and enduring hardships for the advancing Religion,

gion, and promoting the Salvation of Men. For nothing less than the powerful Influences of the Spirit can accomplish Men for, and dispose them to engage in, or to be faithful in the Discharge of such difficult Services.

The Apostles being so wonderfully accomplished for, and spirited unto the difficult Service of preaching the Gospel to all Nations, when they met with such oppositions, and run thro' such dangers, and endured such hardships, who was it from, but from the Holy Ghost, the Promise of the Father, which was in such a wonderful manner poured out upon them? And the Apostle Paul accordingly ascribes it all to God and to his Grace and Spirit, 1 Cor. 15. 10. *I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the Grace of God that was with me.*

But I must have done, for it is more than time that I come to the

## IMPROVEMENT.

I. *Infer. How thankful should we be to God that he is concerned to have suitable Persons employed in his Service!*

It is an unspeakable Mercy to have able, and faithful Ministers, and we are to adore the goodness of God, especially to the Churches of New-England, that he has taken such particular Care of them, as to furnish them from time to time, with Pastors after his own Heart, to seed his People with Knowledge and Understanding. And we should continue our Prayers to the Father of Lights, that he would still continue his special Care

Care of his Churches, that they may always be enlightened with burning and shining Lights.

In. 2. Since God is concerned to have suitable Persons employed in the Ministry, hence Ministers and People should be concerned and careful who they call and put into this sacred Office.

God's being concerned about the matter, shews that it is a matter of great Importance, and that every one ought to be careful and cautious, not sudden or precipitate in such a matter. The advancement of Religion depends very much upon their having wise and faithful Ministers employed in it. A People therefore should be well satisfied of a Man's Qualifications for this sacred Office, before they call him to it; and Ministers must lay Hands suddenly on Man, but be well satisfied of their ministerial Gifts and Graces, before they separate them to that holy Function.

In. 3. How should such as are designing for and entering into this Service, be concerned about themselves, to see that they be such as God approves of, and is willing to employ in his Service!

Surely such should be so concerned in this matter, as to examine themselves very strictly, to see if they find any ministerial Qualifications in them; and ought not to presume so far as to undertake such an important but difficult Service, before they have good grounds to think that God by his Spirit has furnished and accomplished them in some measure for it. None are to go except they be sent; and we may depend upon it, that God never sends any into his Service, that he has not qualified and accomplished for it.

4. In. Ought those whom God has prepared for his Service, readily to offer themselves to it when he calls them, how difficult and discouraging the Service may be? hence then it is matter of Lamentation, that there is such a backwardness to such Service.

When we consider the worth of precious and immortal Souls, and the infinite Price the Son of God has laid down for the Ransome of them, even his own most precious Blood, and that this Sacrifice which Christ has once made of himself is of infinite Value, and sufficient for the whole World: And when we consider that God is willing to be reconciled to every repenting and believing Sinner, and accordingly invites all to come to him, declaring, that *whosoever will, may come to the Waters of Life freely*; I say, when we consider these things, it must needs appear a very lamentable thing, when there are not found those that will carry this joyful News to the Children of Men, and bring them the Invitations of Grace and Mercy that are proclaimed in the Gospel. Shall God so love the World, as to give his only begotten Son for it, and shall Christ not think his Life too dear to lay down for us? and shall we think it much to be at some Pains, and to part with some of the Comforts of the present Life, to carry the everlasting Gospel to them? What a lamentable thing is this! Oh what want of love to God, what want of Zeal for his Glory, and of Compassion for our Fellow-Creatures, discovers it self in such a backwardness!

5. In. Since it is by Men's being touched with the powerful Influences of the holy Ghost, that they are

prepared for and disposed to such difficult Service; hence then, how ought we to pray, that the Spirit might be poured out more plentifully upon the Candidates for the Ministry.

Nothing would serve more for the advancing the Interest of Christ, and for the enlarging the Borders of his Kingdom, than to have a Number raised up, qualified for, and spirited to go forth into Christ's Service, to carry the Gospel-Messages to those that have not as yet received them. And one way that we are to show our concern for the Interest and Glory of Christ, is to pray, that his Spirit may be poured down upon the Candidates for the Ministry, preparing them for, and disposing them to what Service Christ may have for them to do. The Spirit is given as the Answer of Prayer; and we may be encouraged in our Prayers of this kind, because we may be assured that such Prayers are agreeable to his Will. *And this is the Confidence we have, that if we ask any thing according to his Will, he beareth us.*

6. In. How thankful should we be, and give the Glory of it to God, when any are so touched with the blessed Influences of the Holy Spirit, as to be prepared and disposed to engage in the Service of the Gospel-Ministry, even when it is attended with difficult and discouraging Circumstances.

This is the way by which God enlarges his Kingdom, and makes way for bringing in his Elect in all parts of the World, by raising up and spiriting one and another to carry the everlasting Gospel to them. And therefore, if we are heartily concerned for the advancement of the Kingdom

Kingdom and Interest of Christ, and if we have any Concern for the Salvation of Men, we shall be thankful to God when any are spirited to go forth into his Service, acknowledging to his Glory that all accomplishments for, and Inclinations to undertake such a Service come from him, and are the effect of the powerful Operations of the Holy Ghost upon their Souls. We should bless God for all the Prophets of old that God raised up, and sent forth, and for the holy Apostles, and for all the faithful Ministers of the Gospel: for if they had not been touched with a Coal from the Altar, with the quickening, sanctifying, and encouraging Influences of the Holy Spirit, we should all have been under Heathenish darkness, perishing for lack of vision.

I shall now conclude with applying what has been said, to the People of this place, and to the occasion of this solemn meeting together.

God in his sovereign Providence has settled you in a very fruitful part of the Land, and upon outward Accounts it may be said, that the Lines are fallen to you in a pleasant place, and he has given you a goodly heritage; but you have been unhappy on spiritual Accounts, that you have not had such a plentiful Enjoyment of the Gospel and the blessed Ordinances of it. And more unhappy, that you have not been so sensible of the want hereof, nor so concerned as you ought to have been for the enjoyment of such unspeakable Privileges, or at least, such a Number as to support the Gospel among you. Your Case has been pitied by your Christian Friends, and many Prayers have been going up to the God of all Grace for

you, and many Endeavours used that you might not be any longer as Sheep without a Shepherd.

And it has been a great concern among the People of God, and especially among the Ambassadors of Christ, to have a proper and suitable Person sent among you. And we may suppose, God himself has been concerned in this matter, and that a Council has been held in Heaven upon it, saying, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* Such have been the discouragements in the way, that it has been difficult to find a suitable Person to engage in this Service. But the God of the spirits of all Flesh, that God who has the Hearts of all in his own Hands, and can turn them as the Rivers of Waters are turned, has found out a Man for you, uniting your Hearts in him, and inclining his Heart to undertake this difficult Service among you, answering with the Prophet, *Here am I, send me,* and who is at this time to be set over you in the Lord, to whom I would now in the first place apply my self.

And DEAR SIR,

I would assure you that it is with uncommon delight, and unfeigned thankfulness to God, that we see you ready to undertake this difficult and important Service, that God in his Providence is calling you unto. We rejoice that God, whom we conclude, has from the beginning designed you to be his Messenger unto his People, has been in the course of his Providence fitting and preparing you for it, by not only the Religious, but the liberal Education that he has afforded you.

And

And now we hope and trust that he has in some measure prepared you for his Service, as he did the holy Prophet, for that which he called him unto. We trust that you have had such a spiritual sight of the King, the Lord of Hosts, as to fill you with humility and self-abasement, and that God has now touched you with a Coal from the Altar, that he has touched your Heart with his Grace and Spirit: that it is from a Heart full of Love to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and with the highest Concern for the advancing his Kingdom and Interest, and out of a sincere Love, and tender Compassion to the Souls of Men, and to this People in particular, that you are now surrendering up your self, into the Service of Jesus Christ among them.

The work of the ministry has its difficulties in every place, but it will be attended with peculiar difficulties in this place; and it will require uncommon degrees of Knowledge, of Wisdom and of Grace to manage it aright: I don't say this to discourage you from your undertaking, but only to quicken you unto frequent and earnest suits to God in Faith and Prayer, who is able to supply all your needs, according to his riches in Glory by Christ Jesus. Don't be discouraged from the Troubles, the Trials, and the Temptations you may have the prospect of, but encourage your self in the Lord your God, remembering that Christ who sends you, is ready to afford his Presence and his Grace that shall be sufficient for you, and therefore if at any time your Heart be overwhelmed with trouble,

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let it only lead you to the Rock that is higher than you.

The Advice of our Saviour to his Disciples when he sent them forth, *Mattb. 10. 16.* *Be ye wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves,* is peculiarly proper for you: A wise and a prudent Conduct, and a harmless Life and Conversation, will be absolutely necessary for the successful Administration of the Affairs of Christ's Kingdom in this place. Be frequently then applying your self to the Father of lights, and the God of all Grace, that he in whose Name you go forth, would counsel, direct, and assist you at all times.

You must teach and assert with all boldness, the Doctrines and the Duties of the Gospel, and must endeavour to convince Gainsayers; but foolish and unlearned Questions you must avoid, knowing that they gendre strife. And even your asserting and maintaining the Truths of the Gospel to those that oppose it, must be in a calm and peaceable way, not shewing Anger or Passion; for *the Servant of the Lord must not strive,* but be gentle to all Men, be apt to teach, and patient under all Oppositions he meets with, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And Endeavour to recommend your Doctrines by your Example, exhibit to them in your Life an Example of Faith, and Patience, of Humility, of Holiness and heavenly-mindedness, that such as will not at first hearken to your Preaching, may be won by your good Conversation in Christ.

And

And now be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus, and endure hardness as a good Soldier, patiently bearing all the Fatigues and Difficulties, and the Reproaches that you may meet with. And remember to imitate your Master, who when he was reviled, reviled not again. Don't be discouraged, if you should not meet with great Success at first: † in the Morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening withhold not thine Hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that. The Disciples had toiled all Night and got nothing, but in the Morning they caught a great number\*. If your beginning be but small, the latter end may be greatly increased. But if after all you should fail of the desired Success, yet if you are faithful and continue so, your Labour will not be in vain as to you, for if *Israel* should not be gathered, yet you will be glorious in the Eyes of the Lord: Your Judgment will be with the Lord, and your Reward with your God.

I shall have done, when I have addressed myself very briefly to the Flock and Congregation that usually assembles in this Place.

And now *dearly beloved in our Lord Jesus*, we heartily rejoice with you, that the Prayers and the charitable and pious Contributions of God's People, and the faithful Endeavours of his Ministers have been so far blessed, as to make way for your gathering into a Church-state, and to have the Gospel and the blessed Ordinances settled among you.

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† Eccl. 11. 6.    ‡ Luke 5. 5.

And now as to such of you as are about to give up your selves first to God, and then to one another in a solemn Covenant; O see that you do it with all humility, with all seriousness and sincerity, remembering that you have to do with a holy and a jealous God, that searches all Hearts, who cannot be deceived, and won't be mocked. And now see to it, that with all Love and Thankfulness you receive him that is coming to you in the Name of the Lord. The Voice of the Lord has been, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for me?* For many Years none have been willing to undertake, but now at length, God has raised up one, who answers with the Prophet, *Here am I, send me.* Now therefore receive him as one sent of God unto you, as a Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, receive him as a precious Gift of our ascended Saviour, and as one that comes in his Name, vested with Power and Authority from him, and pay him the Love, the Respect, and Obedience that is due to an Ambassador of Jesus Christ. Give your diligent Attendance upon his sacred Ministries, receive his Counsels and Instructions that are agreeable to the Word of God, as the Voice of God unto you: and take heed how you hear: and see that you attend with Reverence and Devotion on the divine Ordinances: take heed that you don't grieve him by an unsuitable and disorderly walk, or by offering any Contempt to God's House, his Day, his Ministers, his Word, and his Ordinances. See that you esteem him very highly in Love for his work's sake, do what you can for his com-

comfortable support among you, and if he sows unto you spiritual things, don't think it hard if he reaps of your carnal things.

Furthermore, make it your daily practice to pray for him, and strive together in your Prayers to God for him, that he may be an able Minister of the New-Testament, and that he may come to you in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

In a word, take heed that you receive not the Grace of God in vain, for now Christ is come unto you by his Minister, you will have no Cloak for your Sin, and how will you escape if you neglect so great Salvation ! But we hope better things of you, even things that accompany Salvation. In a word, we shall not cease to pray for you, that God would bless you with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ; that you may be increased with all the increasings of God : and that there may be daily Additions made unto you, of such as shall be saved. And we do accordingly with Faith and Fervency commend you to God, and to the word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

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